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ABSTRACT

An outline is given of a model procedure by which teachers can ascertain the reading level of students so they may match the students' ability in reading comprehension with the subject content of a course. This six-step model may be viewed as a continuum of material and student assessment, teaching, evaluation, and reassessment of material and student match. A Cloze test and vocabulary recognition test are first given to the students. The teacher then follows these steps to assure maximum comprehension of the subject: (1) determine the approximate level of difficulty of the books that are to be used by the students; (2) determine the students' proficiencies in the use of assigned textbooks and find an approximate reading level for less able students; (3) provide reading material at a variety of reading levels; (4) read the material in advance looking for obstacles to comprehension; (5) prepare the students for the ideas, vocabulary, and main objectives of the reading selection; and (6) follow up each lesson to ensure comprehension of the essential elements inherent in the lesson. (JD)

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ACCOMODATING READING LEVELS IN A SUBJECT AREA CLASSROOM: A SIX-STEP MODEL FOR PRE AND IN-SERVICE TRAINING

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ACCOMODATING READING LEVELS IN A SUBJECT AREA CLASSROOM:
A SIX-STEP MODEL FOR PRE AND IN-SERVICE TRAINING

Teachers in every subject area expect reading capability of each student. It is incumbent upon these teachers to provide reading material with which a student can enjoy success and mastery. It follows that teacher trainers must assume responsibility for presenting ways of accomplishing this task for both pre and in-service teachers.

In the following discussion, a six-step model intended to accomodate a multiplicity of reading levels, experiential backgrounds, and interests in a content (subject) area situation will be explored. The model was specifically designed to heighten teacher sensitivity to variation in student reading capability. The model was originally developed and piloted in seven Southwest Iowa intermediate and secondary schools in-service training sessions.

INSERT FIGURE 1

At Step One, the instructor reviews available material in the subject area. Selecting books most in concert with his/her goals, the teacher assesses and records the levels of difficulty of the chosen material. Although many readability formulae are available, this program chose to in-service the teachers with the Fry. The reasons for selecting this readability formula were two-fold: (1) It is a relatively easy formula to understand; (2) The formula can be computed easily and quickly. Users of any readability formula must be cautioned,

however, that it will yield a "ball park" figure only. Many other factors must be considered in determining the difficulty of material. Two of these additional factors are student familiarity with the vocabulary and concepts included, and the student background of knowledge in the general area.

Once material has been assessed and selected, student proficiency in the use of that material must be determined. In-servicing of this portion of the 6-step model assures teacher familiarity with several techniques of student assessment: the Cloze; a text-book inventory; and the San Diego Quick Assessment.

(a) Teachers learn to construct, administer, and score a Cloze test. (A 250 word passage is selected from the text. Leaving the first and last sentence in tact, every fifth word is deleted. Students are instructed to fill in the missing words.) The teachers quickly realize, through an actual simulation activity, that if more than 50% of the blanks cannot be filled correctly, the material is incomprehensible.

(b) A teacher-made textbook inventory is constructed. Such an instrument provides input as to a student's ability to understand and utilize the sundry subsets of the book (e.g. Table of Contents, Glossary, Index). It also enables the teacher to assess student ability to read and answer questions based upon a specific selection in the proposed materials.

(c) If students are unable to function in the selected materials it is incumbent upon the instructor to find information with which the student can progress and master the subject area readings.

The San Diego Quick Assessment, administered on an individual basis in a very few minutes will give the teacher a general idea of the reading level of those students unable to function in grade level materials. The San Diego is a listing of ten words at each grade level. The point at which a student can quickly recognize eight of the ten words is the approximate reading level for that individual.

INSERT FIGURE 2

The third step requires a change in mind-set for many teachers. Here, the inservice confronts much prejudice concerning the "watering down" of information. Before teachers can be asked to consider simplified texts, a rewriting of the material, or the use of alternative methods of presentation, much groundwork must be laid.

Teacher readiness is the essence of Step Four, while student readiness encompasses Step Five. Since one flows so naturally into the other, they are being discussed simultaneously. Teacher readiness must include awareness of obstacles to comprehension such as restricted background of information, concept density, and vocabulary sophistication. Once these "demons" have been isolated, the teacher learns when and how to employ a variety of techniques to insure student readiness to grasp the material.

Inservicing in this arena focuses upon procedures a teacher can use to execute Steps Four and Five. The structured overview as suggested by Ausbel and the Aukerman survey are two excellent

devices to focus student attention. In addition, teachers are encouraged to teach actively the new vocabulary. The training session, at this point, focuses in on the entire area of readiness and its importance to learning. Teachers must be made to understand that a complete session spent in student preparation for the reading task, time spent in goal-setting for the reading, is a long-term investment in learning.

At the inception of a semester, unit, chapter, or section to be studied, the planner lays the groundwork for the top rung of this six-step model. It is in the planning stages that the instructor identifies goals and constructs student-centered objectives. These objectives constitute the frame of reference for follow-up activity (be it projects, tests, etc.). It is of these objectives that the instructor must insure student mastery. Thus from the very first step, when the teacher selects materials, on through student assessment, and into teacher and pupil readiness, the top priority of the teacher remains student mastery of those ideas germane to success in the subject. It becomes apparent that the six-step model can also be viewed as a continuum; a continuum of material and student assessment, teaching, evaluation, and reassessment of material and student match.

Inservicing of this type requires time. Time to present, time to internalize, time to design and experiment with the procedures, and time to regroup and restructure, if necessary. Each step is designed to constitute a one-hour in-service

module. Ideally, each one hour in-service should have a follow-up activity. This is the time when the in-service presenter and the individual teacher can confer to implement activity on a concrete level; it is only on this very practical level that change will take place.

If teachers are going to continue to use written materials, and it can be assumed that they will, then it follows that they must use whatever methods it takes to ensure student use of that material. This model suggests one means of buying that insurance.

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Figure 1: Six Steps To Content Reading

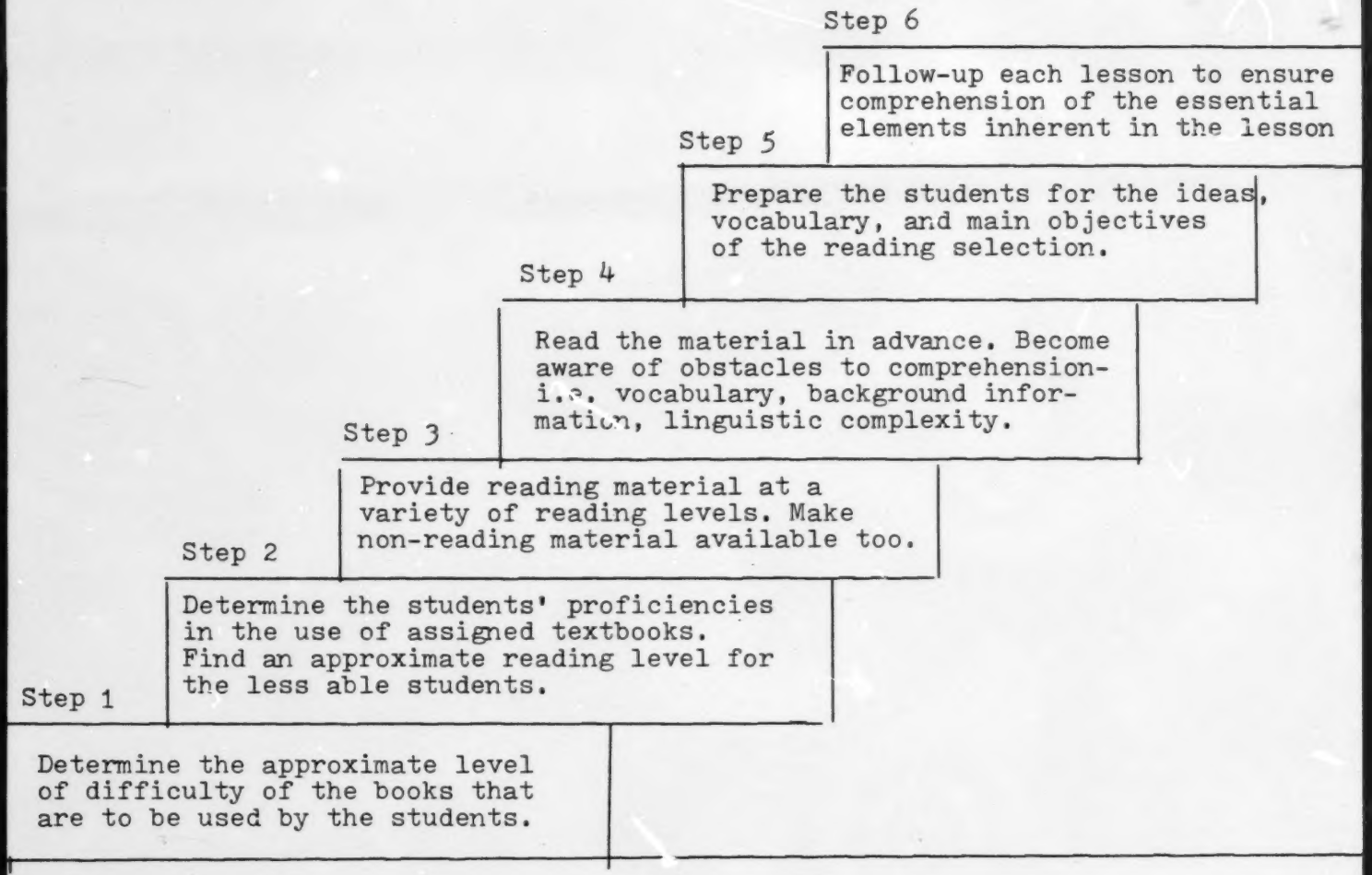
Step 6
Follow-up each lesson to ensure comprehension of the essential elements inherent in the lesson
Step 5
Prepare the students for the ideas, vocabulary, and main objectives of the reading selection.
Step 4
Read the material in advance. Become aware of obstacles to comprehension- i.e. vocabulary, background information, linguistic complexity.
Step 3
Provide reading material at a variety of reading levels. Make non-reading material available too.
Step 2
Determine the students' proficiencies in the use of assigned textbooks. Find an approximate reading level for the less able students.
Step 1
Determine the approximate level of difficulty of the books that are to be used by the students.

Figure 2: San Diego Quick Assessment

Pre-primer	Primer	1
see	you	road
play	come	live
me	not	thank
at	with	when
run	jump	bigger
go	help	how
and	is	always
look	work	night
can	are	spring
here	this	today

2	3	4
our	city	decided
please	middle	served
myself	moment	amazed
town	frightened	silent
early	exclaimed	wrecked
send	several	improved
wide	lonely	certainly
believe	drew	entered
quietly	since	realized
carefully	straight	interupted

5	6	7
successful	bridge	amber
business	commercial	dominion
develop	abolish	sundry
considered	trucker	capillary
discussed	apparatus	daunted
behaved	elementary	impetuous
splendid	comment	blight
acquainted	necessity	wrest
escaped	gallery	enumerate
squirming	relativity	condescent

8	9	10
capacious	conscientious	zany
limitation	isolation	jerkin
pretext	molecule	nausea
intrigue	ritual	gratuitous
delusion	momentous	linear
immaculate	vulnerable	inept
ascent	kinship	legality
acrid	conservatism	aspen
binocular	jaunty	prevaricate
embankment	inventive	barometer

11		
galore	risible	luxuriate
rotunda	exonerate	piebald
capitalism	superannuate	crunch
amnesty		